

JOHN WEBSTER: THE PERIODS OF HIS WORK AS DETER-
MINED BY HIS RELATIONS TO THE DRAMA OF HIS DAY

(FIRST CHAPTER ONLY)

Inaugural-Dissertation

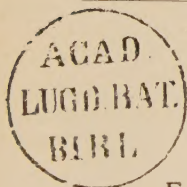
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ELMER EDGAR STOLL

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¹ Other works used are cited in full in the notes.

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⁴ But really of 1867.

⁵ This ed. is used unless there is statement to the contrary.

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⁷ Used when line-numbers are cited.

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- See *Sampson*, above.

¹ Used instead of Dekker for *Roaring Girl*.

² This presents the only good texts, but it appeared too late to be used for the citations.

³ Used for *Contention, True Tragedie of Yorke, True Tragedie of Rich. III, Troublesome Raigne, etc.*

⁴ Used for the plays.

⁵ Cited as "Works," or "Haz."

CHAPTER I.

CHRONOLOGY, AND THE AUTHORSHIP OF DOUBTFUL PLAYS.

IN order to understand the development of John Webster's art, it is necessary to undertake a rather extensive investigation of the dates of the composition of his plays, and, further, of the authenticity of some of the doubtful ones. Of the eleven plays still preserved to bear his name, two were first published long after Webster and his theatres were silent; and none bears the date of the acting. Of three of these, the authorship has been called in question. One of them, the *Cure for a Cuckold*, I shall seek to prove Webster's own; two, the *Thracian Wonder* and *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall*, spurious.

I. LOST PLAYS.

Of the first plays of Webster, we have the dates and nothing more. These are derived from entries in Henslowe's Diary. The first is as follows:

Lent vnto wm Jube the 3 of novmbr 1601 to bye stamell cllath for a clocke¹ for the Webster
gwissee the some of iij^{li}. P. 149.

This Collier² took² to be the drama Webster mentions in the dedicatory letter to Sir Thomas Finch, prefixed to his *Devil's Law-Case*:

Some of my other works, as *The White Devil*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Guise*, and others, you have formerly seen: I present this humbly to kiss your hands and to find your allowance: nor do I much doubt it, knowing the greatest of the Cæsars have cheerfully entertained less poems than this³; etc.

Such a connection as Collier supposes is in itself suspicious. Why should Webster mention the *Guise* with pride, in company with his masterpieces, if it be so early a play as to precede work so crude and colorless as his in partnership with Dekker or his *Induction to the Malcontent*? or if the "Gwissee" be only a recast of Marlowe's

¹ This is evidently *cloak*, for the next entry (p. 150) is to "bye fuschen and lynynge for the clockes for the masaker of france."

² Footnote to Henslowe (Coll.), pp. 202-3.

³ Works, vol. III, p. 5.

Massacre at Paris (as Collier also suggests)?¹ But the main objection is in the entry itself. "*Webster*," Collier says, "is interlined, perhaps in a different hand"; but Mr. G. F. Warner says it is *forged*. Even on "internal evidence" the entry is highly suspicious: why, as Mr. Fleay suggests, should the name of the author be added to an entry that has to do with the buying of properties? But it is spurious: "there can be no doubt whatever," says Mr. Warner, "that the name was not written by the same hand as the rest of the entry; and it is equally evident that it is a spurious modern addition."² Now it is not cited by Dyce among the other entries in Henslowe at p. v of his introduction to the edition of 1830: it therefore did not then exist.

The "Gwisse," then, is nothing but Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*, entered eight times³ in Henslowe, and indifferently as "gves," "Gwies," "gwissee," "gwessee," "masaker," "massaker," "masacer," "masacar," — not Webster's *Guise*. When this last was written no one knows; but it is not improbable, as we shall yet see, that Webster in his words to Finch was writing carefully and chronologically, and that, as in his mention of them *Malfi* rightly follows the *White Devil*, the *Guise* rightly follows *Malfi*, and belongs to the period 1617-22.

Of the remaining lost plays, I have only to record a series of entries⁴:

Lent vnto the company the 22 of maij 1602 to geue vnto antoney monday & mihell drayton webester & the Rest in earneste of a Boocke called sesers fialle the some of v^{ll}. P. 166.

Lent unto Thomas downton the 29 of maye 1602 to paye Thomas dickers drayton mydellton & webester & mondaye in fulle paymente for ther playe called too shap^{es},⁵ the some of iij^{ll}. P. 167.

Lent unto Thomas hewode & John webster the 2 of novmbr 1602 in earneste of a playe called cryssmas comes bute once ayeare the some of iij^{ll}.⁶ P. 184.

One more dramatic work, a lost one, completes the list. In Sir Henry Herbert's office-book there is an entry under date of September, 1624:

A new Tragedy, called, *A Late Murther of the Sonn upon the Mother*: Written by Forde, and Webster.⁷

¹ Henslowe (Coll. ed.), p. 202, note.

² G. F. Warner, *Catalogue of Mss. and Muniments of Alleyn's College of God's Gift at Dulwich*, London, 1881, pp. 161-2. Cf. Greg's Henslowe, pp. xlii-iii.

³ See the Index to Henslowe (Coll. ed.). But I give Greg's readings, pp. 15, 17, 72, 149, 150, 153, etc., twice with "of France" following, never "at Paris."

⁴ Given in Haz., but I take them directly from Henslowe.

⁵ Coll. reads 'too harpes.'

⁶ There are also two entries recording payments to Dekker and to Chettle on the same play, the 23rd and the 26th of November, p. 185.

⁷ See George Chalmers's *Supplemental Apology for Believers in the Shakspeare-Papers*, London, 1799, pp. 218-19.

II. THE MALCONTENT.

In 1604 Marston's *Malcontent* was first published. It appeared in two editions by the same publisher; the first entirely by Marston, the second "augmented by Marston, with additions played by the King's Majesties Servants, written by John Webster." The play was registered July 5th, 1604. It was in this same year that Webster's part was contributed. Reasons *why* are involved with the question *how much* he contributed, both of which matters were best relegated to Chapter II.

Three plays, all first printed in 1607, bear also Dekker's name, — *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, *Westward Ho*, and *Northward Ho*. They are Dekker's, as we shall see in Chapter II, in substance, style, and spirit; and nothing in them would suggest that they are also Webster's. But three title-pages of first editions are too strong to be lightly confuted, even on evidence of a positive character; and such is wanting.

III. SIR THOMAS WYATT.

Wyatt is the earliest, certainly, of the three. The style is more primitive (though of course Elizabethan tragedy can not be profitably compared with comedy in this respect, being far more conventionalized and conservative); and there is earlier external evidence, that is, in Henslowe:

Lent vnto thomas hewode the 21 of octobr 1602 to paye vnto mr deckers chettell smythe the webster & hewode in fulle payment of ther playe of ladye Jane the some of v^{ll} x^s. P. 183.

Lent vnto John ducke the 27 of octobr 1602 to geue vnto thomas deckers in earneste of the 2 pt of Lady Jane the some of v^s. P. 184.

That the title should here be *Lady Jane* is not surprising: that is Henslowe's way. Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*, as we have seen, Henslowe calls indiscriminately "Gwisse" and "Massacre of France," and he calls the *Spanish Tragedy* "Jeronymo"; hence it is not at all surprising, especially when we remember that, as a rule, these English historical plays were named after the king or queen at the centre of the action (cf. Shakspeare's *Henries* and *Richards*), that Henslowe should name the play after the occupant of the throne rather than after the partisan, and principal character, Wyatt. As to a Second Part, it is difficult to conceive of it unless it be in the present play, which contains Jane's and her husband's death, and the "coronation of Queen Mary, and the coming in of King Philip"; and Dyce's conjecture² that *Wyatt*

¹ See Boas, *Kyd's Works*, Oxford, 1901, p. xli.

² See Dyce's *Webster*, ed. 1857, p. xii.

is composed of fragments from the two parts may be correct. Yet the play is over small to be a consolidation of two parts, and the coronation and the "coming in of King Philip" appear only on the title-page, not in the text itself; and loose and fragmentary as the structure is, it is not more so than that of plenty of chronicle-histories. So it is quite as possible that we have here the First Part alone.¹

IV. THE CITIZEN PLAYS.

The next play in point of time is *Westward Ho*, registered to print March 2nd, 1605. Its probable backward limit is the taking of Ostend, September 24th, 1604²:

How long will you hold out, think you? not so long as Ostend. *W. H.*, I, 1, p. 71.

The book of the siege of Ostend, writ by one that dropped in the action, will never sell so well as a report of the siege between this grave, this wicked elder and thyself: an impression of you two would away in a May morning. *IV*, 2.

The interest of the English in the siege, as history shows,³ was great, and contemporary allusions in the dramatists are numerous.⁴ This first allusion proves that the play was acted at least after the length of the siege of Ostend had become proverbial; and it would fit better, of course,—as insinuating that she could not hold out forever—after Ostend had been taken. The second would seem to indicate the author's own observation, and that the 'book' was out, and the siege over.⁵

¹ Mr. Fleay (I, p. 130; II, 269) is of the opinion (without argument) that *Wyatt* was put together from fragments at a date considerably later than 1602. He makes the simple statement, as if the play itself indicated it: "Queen Anne had been crowned, James had come in, and the Cobham plot had been discovered in the meanwhile."—Of all this, there is no shred of evidence.

² Mr. Fleay (II, pp. 269-70) settles the very month and day of D.'s and W.'s parts. A story is told in III, 3 (*Just*. I'll tell thee. The term lying at Winchester in Henry the Third's days, etc.), and Mr. Fleay infers that the date of this part was summer, and the summer of 1603! He adds: "In *Northward Ho* we are told that *Westward Ho* was acted 'before Christmas,' but it was only just before." Mr. Fleay does not give a reference to the passage, but it is certainly *N. H.*, I, 2, p. 186: "and for those poor wenches that *before Christmas* fled westward with bag and baggage." It has no possible reference to *W. H.*, but is one of many references to ridding the city proper of harlots. The citizens' wives in *W. H.* were not poor wenches, nor did they flee with bag and baggage: they went on a lark. And "*westward*" by no means equals "*westward ho!*"

³ Gardiner, *Hist. of Eng. 1603-1642*, vol. I, pp. 102, 214.

⁴ Tourneur's *Ath. Tr.*: Chapman, etc.

⁵ I am loath to give up what at first seemed to settle the date of *W. H.* definitely, and at the same time shed an interesting light on Dekker's journalistic methods of work,—a coincidence between the name of the Italian merchant Justiniano in the play, and the Venetian ambassador "Justiniano" (Ital. *Giustiniano* and *Venet*).

The date of *Northward Ho* is somewhat involved with the dates of the two other citizen comedies — *Westward Ho*, and Jonson, Chapman, and Marston's *Eastward Ho*. What was the order of these plays? *Westward Ho*, *Eastward Ho*, *Northward Ho*, answers Mr. Fleay, and, I think, rightly. *Westward Ho*, the pioneer, was written by Dekker and Webster for the Children of Paul's¹; *Eastward Ho* was written by Jonson and the rest, in friendly, interloping rivalry, for the Children of her Majesty's Revels at Blackfriars²; and *Northward Ho* was the Paul's³ rejoinder. For *Eastward Ho* contains in its prologue a reference to *Westward Ho*, not only so precise in character as not to be mistaken, but also so frankly laudatory as evidently to challenge for itself a similar success⁴; and *Northward Ho*, unmentioned

Giustinian) mentioned by Mr. Pory in a letter to Sir Robert Cotton, Jan., 1605 (*Court and Times of James I*, London, 1848, I, 44). He tells of the splendor of the presentation of him to the king by the outgoing ambassador, Molino. But the date 1605 is Old Style, actually is 1606 (a date which *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, vol. X, art. 544, confirms). Giustiniano was not appointed till Mar. 18, 1605, and did not reach London till Jan., 1606. (Cf. Borazzi e Berchet, Ven., 1863, Ser. IV, *Inghil.* p. 3 f). Yet it seems as if there must be more than chance to explain this coincidence and another, — the name of the character Candido in a drama of this very year (*H. W.*, 1604). A Signor Candido is spoken of by John Chamberlain in a letter dated Mar. 25, 1612 and again, April, 1612, to Sir Dudley Carleton (*ibid.*, pp. 164-6). He seems to be, like Carleton, in Venice, to have to do with the Bishop of Ely, and to have written a panegyric on James I. This Candido *may* have been Vincent Marine Candido, 1573-1637 (*Biog. Gén.*); — but I make no further progress. Yet there may have been some way for the poet of the *Roaring Girl* (Moll Cutpurse, a character of the day, see Bullen's Middleton, IV, p. 4), of Ravalliac (*If This be not a Good Play*), to learn of these names; and Justiniano may not have been the name of the character at the first performance.

¹ That *W. H.* was from the first written for Paul's — not an acquisition shortly before publication in 1607 — is proved by the registration at the Stationers', Mar. 2, 1604: "presented by the children of Paul's."

² Title-page of 1605 Q.

³ Title-page.

⁴ Noted first by Dyce:

"Not out of envy, for there's no effect
Where there's no cause; nor out of imitation,
For we have evermore been imitated;
Nor out of our contention to do better
Than that which is opposed to ours in title,
For that was good; and better cannot be:
And for the title, if it seem affected,
We might as well have called it, "God you good even";
Only that eastward westwards still exceeds,
Honor the sun's fair rising, not his setting.
Nor is our title utterly enforced,
As by the points we touch at you shall see.
Bear with our willing pains, if dull or witty,
We only dedicate it to the city."

in the prologue, contains a satire on Chapman, who was probably the main author of *Eastward Ho*. With this, such dates as are at hand agree. *Westward Ho* was registered, as we have seen, March 2nd, 1605; *Eastward Ho* was registered at the Stationers' September 4th, and the authors of it, who were arrested for satire of the Scotch, found themselves in prison at least after May, 1605¹; and *Northward Ho* was not registered till August 6th, 1607.

Northward Ho is, then, the last in the series. In my opinion, it is so late as to fall within the year 1606.² It contains (IV 4,) a passage³ remarkably similar to Marston's *Fawn*, borrowed, I think, from it:

Bell. But what say you to such young gentlemen as they are?

Fawd. Foh! they, as soon as they come to their lands, get up to London, and like squibs that run upon lines, they keep up a spitting of fire and cracking till they ha' spent all; and when my squib is out what says his punk? foh, he stinks!

N. H., p. 242.

Herod. . . . What, more fire-works, sir?

Page. There be squibs, sir; which squibs, running upon lines, like some of our gaudy gallants, sir, keep a smother, sir, with flishing and flashing, and, in the end, sir, they do, sir—

Nym. What, sir?

Page. Stink, sir. *Fawn*, I, 2, 20 f.

The basis of these two unedifying passages is possibly, as with so many Elizabethan jokes and diatribes, a popular saying; but there is no question, nevertheless, that in phrasing the one passage is indebted to the other.⁴ Which is the original? Certainly, if coherence and continuity of texture are signs of originality (and patchwork of borrowing), it is Marston's. Only in his is the real force of the figure to be felt: it is broken and obscured by the "spent all" in Dekker and Webster. The style of his passage, moreover, is thoroughly his own,—the delight in disgusting images, the "smartness" of expression, the

¹ As is proved by Jonson's celebrated letter, dated 1605 (Gifford's *Jonson*, Mem., pp. 40-41). This letter, as Fleay notes, must be subsequent to May 4th, for Cecil was then first created Earl of Salisbury.—That the letter refers to *E. H.*, and is written on occasion of imprisonment for it, no one should doubt; yet Gifford, Bullen, and Fleay all think this a subsequent imprisonment. There is no space to go into the matter here; but the only good reason ever offered—J.'s failure to mention Mars.—is absolutely confuted by Jonson's and Chap.'s letters, discovered by Mr. B. Dobell, and pub. in *Athenaeum*, March 30th, 1901. In these complaints to the King, Lord Chamberlain, and others, neither of the authors mentions M.; and Chap. expressly says (to the King), that their offence consists "but in two clawses and both of them not our owne." Marston's, then, who had escaped.

² Mr. Fleay (II, 270) dates the play 1605, c. Feb. Yet he holds it the last of the plays!

³ Pointed out in Bullen's *Marston*, Vol. II, p. 121.

⁴ The figure occurs, in other form, phrasing, and application, elsewhere in Dekker, as *H. W.*, p. 219.

real *force* in both rhetorical structure and figure.¹ Yet these same qualities, lacking generally in Webster and Dekker, are perceptible even in the corresponding passage of their play. Now Marston's play was registered March 12, 1606, and published in two editions the same year, while *Northward Ho* was not registered till 1607. When, then, we consider, further, that Marston according to Anthony Wood's account 'was in great renown in 1606 for his wit and ingenuity,' and that Webster himself in his next succeeding work has two quotations from this very play,² it seems pretty probable that Webster and Dekker, in order to piece out the rather skimble-skamble stuff of the crazy bawd's speeches, had stolen this impudent saying from Marston.

The *Fawn* first appeared on the boards after January, 1606. It contains a reference to the execution of Sir Edward Digby and his fellows, January 30th, 1606.³ That the play appeared in print so soon thereafter is only in keeping with what we know of its popularity: two editions appeared that same year, one of them pirated, and in the other the author himself declares, that "it cannot avoid publishing." If, then, the *Fawn* is to be dated after January, 1606, *Northward Ho*

¹ It is unprofitable to quote examples, but any one who will read more of the *Fawn* or *D. C.*, or the Erichtho passages in *Sophon.*, will find plenty. In the *Fawn* itself: II, 1, 39-42; 1, 94-97; 1, 78-81; IV, 1, 545-7; I, 2, 221 f. Cf. *Malc.*, V, 1, 34, where 'stinkard' is used as synonymous with the sort of man Marston here describes.

² *Fawn*, IV, 1, 106, and *W. D.*, p. 15; *Fawn*, IV, 1, 328, and *W. D.*, p. 22 (this dubious).

³ *Fawn*, IV, 1, 309 f: "Nay, heed me, a woman that will thrust in crowds,—a lady, that, being with child, ventures the hope of her womb,—nay, gives two crowns for a room to behold a goodly man three parts alive quartered, his privities hacked off, his belly lanced up,"—Mr. Bullen (*in loc.*) says it refers to Digby, and cites Stow, ed. 1631, p. 882, which runs thus: "The next Thursday [Jan. 30th] Sir Edward Digby, Robert Winter, Graunt, and Bates were drawn, hanged, and quartered at the West End of Saint Paul's Church. . . . Friday, the last of January, in the Parliament Yard at Westminster were executed as the former, Thomas Winter, Rookewood, Keyes, and Fawkes . . . their quarters were placed over London gates, and their heads upon the Bridge." We must confess that we are dealing here only with probabilities; executions—hanging and quartering—were not then uncommon. Mr. Fleay, indeed, holds a brief for that of Watson and Clarke, at Winchester, Nov., 1604 (*sic* always, though Gardiner, *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, and Stow himself, pp. 829-31, say 1603), not only in the case of the *Fawn* but also of *Michaelmas Term* (reg. May, 1607) and *Isle of Gulls* (see below). But the point in the *Fawn* and in *Michaelmas* is, that *women* came to see; that, so great was the crowd, they paid two crowns a room; that it was in London, and all the audience knew of it, and understood without more words. It is impossible to think that it should have been the execution at Winchester (66 miles away, whither at that day few Londoners would have gone for the show, certainly few women) of two obscure offenders; rather than that in the heart of London itself, of the reckless devils who startled Eng. from shore to shore. If ever women went, or if ever rooms round Paul's or Parliament Yard sold high, it was at the execution of the Gunpowder Plotters.

(if it be certain that this play draws the passage from the *Fawn*) must come still later.

To reinforce this long and rather too slender thread of argument, let me join to it another. Day's *Isle of Gulls*, printed in 1606, contains, as Mr. Fleay¹ observes, a reference to all three of our plays, in a passage, which, since it deals with the author and his literary identity, cannot possibly be interpreted according to the primary² meaning of the phrases. It would say, this author is not any of those popular comic poets you already know : —

Prol. A meere stranger, sir?

3. A stranger! the better welcome : comes hee East-ward, West-ward, or Northward hoe?

Prol. None of the three waies, I assure you.

1. Prethe where is he?

Prol. Not on his knees in a corner . . . but close in his studie writing hard to get him a handsome suite against Sommer.

This induction was written, very certainly, for the first performance of the play ; for it speaks anxiously of the reception of it, and of the identity, the trying position, and the needs of the author. The play must have been first performed, therefore, after the series of our three plays *Westward Ho*, *Eastward Ho*, and *Northward Ho*, which starts at the close of 1604, and yet enough before "Sommer" to give pathos to the author's needs. The dilemma is, whether the summer be that of 1605, or that of publication, 1606.³ The quotation from the *Fawn*, considered above, should turn the balance in favor of the latter.

V. THE WHITE DEVIL.

The next play is the *White Devil*. It was printed without registering in 1612, and not again till 1631. To the date of the acting there are many clews.⁴ One is the reference to Barnaby Rich's *New Description of Ireland*,⁵ 1610, long ago pointed out by Reed but hitherto ignored as a means of settling the date :

An Irish gamester that will play himself naked and then wage all downwards at hazard, is not more venturous. *W. D.*, p. 16.

¹ *Biog. Chr.*, I, 105.

² *Haz.*, I, p. 65: "Eastward Ho and Westward Ho were cries of the Thames Watermen," etc.

³ That the *Isle of Gulls* should be thought to contain an allusion to an execution (that is, in the quibble of the Induction on "quarter ourselves"), whether Watson and Clarke's or any other, is absurd.

⁴ The earliest and most certain are the echoes from *Laar*. See Chap. III. *Lear* was acted on St. Stephen's Day, 1606, and first printed in 1608.

⁵ *A new description of Ireland wherein is described the disposition whereunto they are inclined*. Printed for T. Adams, London, 1610.

There is there a certain brotherhood, called by the name of Karrowes, and these be common gamesters, that do only exercise playing at cards, and they will play away their mantels and their shirts from their backs and when they have got nothing left them they will trusse themselves in straw. This is the life they lead, and from this they will not be reclaimed. *New Description*, p. 38.

Another passage, in Brachiano's angry words to Vittoria :

What! dost weep?
Procure but ten of thy dissembling trade,
Ye 'd furnish all the Irish funerals
With howling past wild Irish

may have been suggested by the description, at p. 12 in the same book, of the demeanor of Irish women at funerals.¹ At all events, this book was registered April 10th, 1610.

Another clew is an echo from the *Atheist's Tragedy* (registered September 14th, 1611) to be found in the celebrated trial-scene:

Monticelso : Away with her,
Take her hence.
Vittoria. A rape! a rape!
Mont. How?
Vit. Yes, you have ravish 'd justice;
Forc'd her to do your pleasure. *W. D.*, p. 65.
Sebastian. A rape, a rape, a rape!
Belforest. How now!
D'Amville. What's that?
Sebas. Why what is 't but a rape to force a wench, etc. *Ath. Tr.*, p. 263.

In both cases it is an abrupt cry, unexpected and startling, against unjust force; in both cases, a tropical expression that has to be explained by the speaker. It is very likely, then, that the one was imitated from the other. That one was Webster's; for, if borrowed through print, Tourneur's was the earlier; and if through public rendering, Tourneur's was by far the more prominent and noticeable. The utterance in Webster is without consequence, and is not again alluded to; that in Tourneur, on the other hand, is the cause of the breach between Sebastian and his father, etc., and is alluded to explicitly twice afterwards.² Now the *Atheist's Tragedy* comes later, at least, than *King Lear*, and dates in all probability not long before its publication.³

But the most significant evidence is that of the preface and the postscript.⁴ Here Webster's mood is evidently like Jonson's in his

¹ Neither of these passages could have been suggested by Rich's *Short Survey of Ireland*, 1609 (reg. 1609).

² III, 2, p. 293, and II, 3, p. 273.

³ In 1611. See App. I for the date of this play.

⁴ See *Works*, II, p. 143.

prefaces (though more from neglect than from antagonism), and like Jonson he publishes to right himself. He defends himself for taking so much time to write the play, — a rather pointless thing to do if it were already long before this on the stage; and he alludes to the first performance, twice over, in both preface and postscript, as if it was fresh in his memory. The first time, he assails the “auditory,” and the second, he praises and thanks the actors, one of them especially and by name. This he would hardly have done, or cared to do, long after the performance. For why open an old wound? Why recall his own or others’ forgotten vexations? Let me quote from the preface and postscript themselves:

In publishing this Tragedy, I doe but challenge to myselfe that liberty which other men have tane before mee; not that I affect praise by it, for, *nos haec nouimus esse nihil, onely*, since it was acted in so dull a time of Winter, presented in so open and blacke a theater, that it wanted (that which is the onely grace and setting-out of a tragedy) a full and understanding Auditory; and since that time I haue noted, most of the people that come to that play-house resemble those ignorant asses (who, visiting stationers’ shoppes, their use is not to inquire for good books, but new books), I present it to the generall view with this confidence:

*Nec rhoncos metues maligniorum,
Nec scombris tunicas dabis molestas.*

If it be objected this is no true dramaticke poem, I shall easily confesse it, *non potes in nugas dicere plura meas, ipse ego quam dixi*; willingly, and not ignorantly, in this kind haue I faulted: For should a man present to such an auditory, the most sententious tragedy that euer was written, obseruing all the criticall lawes as heighth of stile, and grauity of person, enrich it with the sententious CHORUS. and, as it were, lifen Death, in the passionate and waighty *Nuntius*: yet after all this diuine rapture, O dura messorum Ilia, the breath that comes from the uncapable multitude is able to poison it . . .

To those who report I was a long time in finishing this tragedy, I confesse I do not write with a goose-quill winged with two feathers; and if they will neede make it my fault, I must answer them with that of Euripides . . .

Detraction is the sworne friend to ignorance: for mine owne part. I haue euer truly cherisht my good opinion of other mens worthy labours, especially of that full and haightned stile of maister CHAPMAN, the labor’d and understanding workes of maister Johnson, the no lesse worthy composures of the both worthily excellent maister Beaumont and maister Fletcher; and lastly (without wrong last to be named), the right happy and copious industry of m. Shake-speare, m. Decker, and m. Heywood, wishing what I write may be read by their light: protesting that, in the strength of mine owne judgment, I know them so worthy, that though I rest silent in my own worke, yet to most of theirs I dare (without flattery) fix that of Martial,

—non norunt Haec monumenta mori.

Works, II, pp. 6-8.

For the action of the Play, ’twas generally well, and I dare affirm, with the joint-testimony of some of their own quality (for the true imitation of life, without striving to make nature a monster) the best that ever became them: whereof as I make a general acknowledgment, so in particular I must remember the well approved industry of my friend Master Perkins, and confess the worth of his action did crown both the beginning and end.

Ib., p. 143.

The nettled spirit and the circumstantiality of these passages seem me to prove they are not long after the event. Details of phrasing confirm this; for there is evidence that before setting at this his first preface Webster looked round for models. He took, piecemeal, the seventeen-word Latin passage above from Dekker's preface — *Ad Detractorem* — to *Satiromastix*,¹ the final "non norunt haec" from Dekker's preface to his *Knight's Conjuring*,² and several phrases and ideas from Jonson's prefaces to *Sejanus* (1605) and to *Catiline* (1611). This last correspondence —

. . . I crave leave to stand near your light, and by that to be read. Posterity may pay your benefit the honour and thanks, when it shall know that you dare, in these jig-given times, to countenance a *legitimate poem*.³ —

might, indeed, be explained away, were it not for the indubitable imitation of the other prefaces, namely, Dekker's, and Jonson's to *Sejanus*.⁴

Finally, at the close of the Epistle Dedicatorie to *If this be not a Good Play*, addressed in this same year of 1612 "to my loving and loved friends and fellowes, the Queenes Maiesties seruants," Dekker says :

I wish a *Faire and Fortunate Day* to your *Next New-Play* for the *Makers-sake* and your *Owne*, because such *Braue Triumphes* of *Poesie*, and *Elaborate Industry*, which my *Worthy Friends Muse* hath there set forth, deserue a *Theater* full of very *Muses* themselves to be *Spectators*. To that *Faire Day* I wish a *Full, Free and Knowing Auditor*, etc. *Works*, Vol. III, p. 262.

This play must be the *White Devil*. Fleay, who first noticed the passage (I, p. 134), says the *Devil's Law-Case*; but that play was certainly not written (as I show below) till 1621-3. Anyway, it would not fit. Dekker is interested, it would seem, in a maiden effort. That the *White Devil* is; and, besides, a "brave Triumph of Poesie," and brought forth by "elaborate Industry," and played, as the title-page of the 1612 Quarto informs us, by the Queen's Servants. Moreover, the fact that Dekker and Webster, after the preceding years of partnership, were now, in 1612, after several changes of company, both writing for the Queen's Men, would argue a great and lasting friend-

¹ Non potes in Nugas dicere plura meas,
Ipse ego quam dixi. — Qui se mirantur, in illos
Virus habe : nos haec nouimus esse nihil.

² *A Knight's Conjuring* (1607?) ; it is the same, word for word, and, as with W., closes the pref.

³ Prefatory Letter to Pembroke.

⁴ The paragraph beginning "If it be objected," etc., for instance, is fairly a plagiarism of the second paragraph of Jonson's address "To the Reader," prefixed to *Sejanus*.

ship between master and pupil. With this, Webster's mention of him by name in the preface is in perfect accord; and I am even inclined to think the Latin line appended to Francisco's speech, at the end of the third act of the *White Devil* (after even the couplet, observe), due, like the seventeen-word Latin motto from *Satiromastix* and the "non norunt" from *A Knight's Conjuring*, to their friendly and intimate relations, and borrowed from the title-page of this very play of Dekker's.¹ However that be, it must be the *White Devil* that Dekker's Epistle Dedicatorie means.²

The allusions in the *White Devil* to Barnaby Rich, to the *Atheist's Tragedy*, and to Jonson's *Catiline*, and the nettled tone of Webster in his preface, all point, then, to a date shortly preceding its publication, not earlier at any rate than 1611; and Dekker's solicitous words in his Epistle Dedicatorie, still more precisely, to the beginning of 1612.³

VI. THE DUCHESS OF MALFI.

The *Duchess of Malfi* was first printed in 1623.¹ It must have been on the stage, as Dyce pointed out, long before, — at least as early as March 16th, 1619, the date of the death of Richard Burbage, who appears in the actors' list of the first edition. Further back than this both Fleay and Dyce have tried to thrust the date, but without success.

Mr. C. Vaughan, however, in his edition of the play, has offered, "with great diffidence," a suggestion which leads, in my opinion, to a definite fixing of the date:

In the opening speeches there is plainly a historical allusion; and probably to contemporary events . . . the reference may be to the assassination of Concini, Maréchal d'Ancre, by order of the young king, Louis XIII. Concini was bitterly

¹ Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo. In W. it has little connection with the context: in D. it fits his title, — *If this be not a good Play, the Diuelli is in it.*

² The antecedent probability is great. If D. and W. were still friendly, as their changes together from Paul's to the Queen's, Web.'s *W. D.* preface, and the borrowings indicate, in whose work should the kindly disposed D. be more interested than in the first unaided effort of his old protégé? And who more likely than D. to have seen the text before the acting?

³ Fleay says "the cold winter of 1607-8," on the strength of the remark in the Preface, and of a connection he discovers between the jousting French ambassador of the play and M. Goterant, who tilted the 24th of March, 1607.

⁴ It is not in the S. R.

⁵ Dyce sets the date at a venture c. 1616. Fleay (II, 273) says Dyce is "utterly wrong: the date of production was c. 1612, when the *White Devil*, with the praise of the King's men's poets, was published." — What Mr. Fleay means — Mr. Ward says he does not know what Mr. Fleay means — is the praise Webster bestows upon the King's Men's poets, Shak., Beau., and Flet., etc., in the preface. Now *Malfi*, we know, was acted by the King's Men — *that* is the basis of Mr. Fleay's inference.

hated ; and his murder was skillfully represented as an act of justice against a public enemy and a traitor. Luines, who advised the king in the matter and succeeded to the power of Concini, made a parade of calling the old councillors of Henry IV back to court. . . . If the suggestion be well founded—but it is offered with great diffidence—we should be able to fix the date of the play more closely, to 1617–18.

Temple Ed. of *Malfi*, p. 146.

This conjecture let me try to base and establish. First of all, consider in the text of the first edition,¹ instead of the very uncertain one of Hazlitt, the two speeches in question :

Delio: How doe you like the French court?

Ant: I admire it,

In seeking to reduce both State and People
To a fix'd Order, there iuditious King
Begins at home: Quits first his Royall Pallace
Of flattring Sicophants of dissolute,
And infamous persons which he sweetly termes
His Master's Master-peece (the worke of Heauen)
Considring duely, that a Princes Court
Is like a common Fountaine, whence should flow,
Pure siluer-droppes in generall: But if 't chance
Some curs'd example poyson't neere the head,
" Death, and diseases through the whole land spread.
And what is 't makes this blessed gouernment,
But a most prouident Councell, who dare freely
Informe him the corruption of the times?
Though some oth' Court hold it presumption
To instruct Princes what they ought to doe,
It is a noble duety to informe them
What they ought to foresee. *Malfi*, I, 1, first speeches.

There is one clumsy, obscure passage, but it means, no doubt, that the work of cleansing the palace was not his work but that of God through him.

In order to explain the political allusion of the above passage, we have, I suppose, to accept one of four alternatives: the allusion might have been taken from the source of the play itself, Painter's novel; or it might be an addition of Webster's own, historically in keeping with the story; or a mere product of the fancy, put in for filling; or an allusion to contemporary affairs. As for the first, Painter contains nothing of this, except the allusion, several times, to Antonio's having been in France; there is no mention of a French king and court.² As to the second, that Webster should have had in mind the French court of Antonio's day, whether that of Lewis XII or Francis I, is out of the question: Webster generally, as the instances of the

¹ Brit. Mus. Q.

² There are indeed two bare mentions of King Lewis [XII] (Painter, vol. III, pp. 4 and 8) by name: "In the time of King Lewis XII," "returned to King Lewis."

Devil's Law-Case or *Appius and Virginia* show, does not stickle for chronology, and indeed in this very play, by his truly Elizabethan handling, has got Bandello's chronology into such a state that it would be impossible to allude intelligibly, without mentioning them by name, to any king or court of France historically in keeping.¹ Had he meant such, moreover, he must certainly have named them for the audience's sake. As for the third alternative, that it is a purely fanciful and random statement is highly improbable, unlike Webster and his time. True, there are plays of the pastoral or romantic type which deal with kings, courts, and people in a land of nowhere, — not in France, though, but in Pannonia, Dacia, Africa, or Sicilia; — but always in full, as the scene of the very improbable action, not, as here, in a passing allusion, directed *away* from the scene of action. Passing allusions when without definite names or dates (that is, jokes, satirical remarks, political judgments, etc.) prove, even in Roman plays, almost always to be anachronistic, to be directed toward contemporary affairs. For, by the Elizabethan dramaturgy characters, even ideas, language, customs, and civilization, were generally conceived and represented, not with a historic sense, but — be the time or scene of action never so far removed — really as coeval, Elizabethan; hence, the insertion of allusions to contemporary affairs and events did not jar. *King Lear*,² *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, Heywood's *Rape of Lucrece*, Webster's *Appius and Virginia*, ancient stories though they be, contain such: others would not have been understood. And in the case of *Malfi* (we take up the last alternative) an allusion to the French king and court, standing at the very beginning of the play, with nothing in the shape of title, scene of action, or preceding time-references to make the audience think otherwise, could not, if it fit at all, mean to the audience, or be intended to mean to it, anything else than the contemporary French king and court.

Does it fit? Let me repeat the story of the D'Ancre affair in brief, and then consider Webster's words in detail. Mary de' Medici, as queen regent since the assassination of her consort Henry IV, in

¹ It must, according to Bandello, have been King Lewis's court (see footnote, p. 23) that Antonio saw. Yet in III, 3, 8 Lannoy is spoken of as having taken "the French king prisoner," which must have been Francis I at Pavia. As Kiesow says (pp. 243-4), the date of action has been brought down a decade. Moreover, on p. 160, in his reference to Gaston de Foix's recovery of Naples in 1501, W., through a careless treatment of his original, as Sampson (p. 386) observes, is making him take a city at 12 years old.

² The "late eclipses" in *Lear*, I, 2, 112; "hands not hearts" in *Othello*, III, 4, 46; the earthquake in *R. & J.*, I, 3, 23; countless ones in *Lucrece*; and some in Corbulo's and the Lictor's talk — such as "prayer book," "lawyers and term time," "the suburbs," the oath Appius took as knight, etc., — in *A. & V.*

1610, had, through her own incapacity and by the baneful influence of the rapacious, tyrannical Concini and his wife, speedily brought France back into a state of anarchy and misery. The nobles were indignant and disaffected, and the people heavily burdened and in want. The young king, Lewis XIII, moreover, chafed at the condescension and insolence of the Concini, and at the insignificance of his position; and, incited by his friends, he resolved to assert himself. When all was ready, on the morning of April 14th, 1617,¹ a certain captain of the guard, Baron de Vitri, arrested Concini as he was entering the Louvre; and, as the official report averred, on a show of resistance, shot him dead. Immediately, a demonstration was made by the King's friends, a proclamation issued announcing the King's assumption of power into his own hands, and a Council summoned of his father's ministers. The Concini faction was either arrested, or expelled from office and the city; the Queen Mother herself, relegated to Blois. Now the Council sat daily; virtuous, sober proclamations were issued; and an Assembly of Notables was called to Rouen, to accomplish what the States-general under Concini had utterly failed to do. Everywhere in Paris and through France the news of the event was heard with joy, and young Lewis was hailed by his people as the Just.²

*In seeking to reduce both State, and People
To a fix'd Order, there iuditious King
Begins at home : Quills first his Royall Pallace
Of flattering Sicophants, etc.*

This is what Louis did: such was the state of his realm. The last States-general rife with dissension and fruitless in outcome,³ a people everywhere clamorous, an insurrection raging in the south, and a palace swarming with 'sicophants,' 'dissolute,' 'infamous' Italians and Spaniards, — such a spectacle meant neither to French nor to English eyes a 'fix'd order.' And one of the first steps Lewis took to better it was to *purge* the palace, — to imprison Barbin, Mangot,⁴ La Place, Oquin-court, Nardy, Concini's wife and some of his confidants⁵, and

¹ Brockh us, 14th ed., art. *Ancre*; Martin says (ed. 1844), vol. XII, p. 345, the 24th, and *Biog. Gén.* (ed. 1855), the same. Brock. must be right, for the first entry in the S. R. (see below, p. 29, note) is on the 17th.

² Martin, ed. 1858, tome XI, pp. 118-19. Bazin. *France sous Louis XIII*, Paris, 1840, t. II, p. 2 f. There is nothing ambiguous in the attitude of all France. "Chacun vantait le coup d'essai de Louis."

³ Gardiner, II, p. 315; Martin, ed. 1858, XI, 86; and Louis's own words in his Declaration qui convoque à Rouen une assemblée de Notables. Isambert et Decrussy, *Recueil Général*, t. XVI, p. 108 f: "n'avaient produit autre fruit sinon que les remonstrances, plaints, et doléances."

⁴ Martin, ed. 1858, tome XI, pp. 117-18.

⁵ *Relation Exacte de Tout ce qui s'est Passé à la Mort du Mareschal D'Ancre* in Michaud et Poujoulat, *Série II*, t. V, p. 464. Martin says Mangot was *déstitué* only.

to have proclaimed that evening, at the sound of the trumpet, that all those in the service of Concini should leave the city on pain of death. The Spanish Ambassador he directed to refrain from acting further as 'major-domo to the reigning queen.'¹ The Queen herself, one of the worst of the crew, he kept, after the loss of her greatest *sicophant*, under surveillance, and shortly relegated to Blois.² And in one of his first proclamations he made known 'that he had besought the queen, his lady and mother, to grant that he himself from now on take in hand the manage of the state, in order that he might rescue it from the straits to which the evil counsels she had followed had reduced it.'³

*Which he sweetly termes
His Master's Master-piece (the worke of Heauen).*

The source of this notion of Webster's is, I think, the French King's *Letter to the Parliament of Rouan*, in 1617⁴:

A disseigne which they so wrought and effected, that hitherto Wee carried but onely the bare Name of, and title of a King: . . . *Which God of his infinie bountie giving Us the grace at last to discerne, and pointing out unto Us as it were with his omnipotent finger, the imminent perill that hung over our person and State, through such an insatiable and irregular ambition; Wee gave testimonie at length of our apprehension at this point, . . . yet were Wee enforced in all our exterior actions, to disguise and cover that, which inwardly in heart Wee determined and resolved upon, while it might please the same our good God to open us a fit way, and convenient opportunity to apply thereunto some prevalent remedy. . . . Moved I say, by these just and most weightie considerations and by the heavenly instinct, that God upon this occasion put into our heart: Wee resolved to secure Our self of the person of the said Marshall D'Ancre, giving express charge to Sieur de Vitry, Capitaine of Our Guards, to apprehend and arrest him within Our Castle of the Louvre. The which Our pleasure hee intending to put into execution, the said Marshall (who according to his accustomed manner had many followers about him) himself with some others of his company made offer to resist: whereupon certain bullets, etc.*⁵

¹ *Relation Exacte*, p. 470.

² See her despicable conduct in Martin above. And see Martin, ed. 1844 (I quote this because ed. 1858 has since become inaccessible to me). XII, 345, note, where account is taken of the popular opinion of illicit relations between her and Concini. In fact, there is quite enough in the fame of the queen and her minions in that day, both in France and in England, to warrant W.'s phrases, "dissolute and infamous persons," "curs't example."

³ Martin, ed. 1858, t. XI, p. 119, "les mauvais conseils dont elle s'etait servie."

⁴ In the Brit. Mus., marked 8050, bbb. 56, Reg. Apr. 23rd, 1617, — a proof of the popular interest in Eng. — The italics in this passage are mine.

⁵ The interpretation thus offered for "Which . . . Heauen" above — that the cleansing of the palace, etc., was God's work through him — seems to me the more certain as I consider other interpretations. Vaughan, who did not take his own suggestion seriously, thinks the antecedent of *which* to be *Pallace!* And Sampson (p. 385): "possibly 'order,' but probably 'persons,' i. e., man, being the chief work of the creator." That is, this king, whoever he be, "sweetly termes" these "infamous persons" he is chasing away, his Master's Masterpieces! The neatness with

*And what is't makes this blessed gouvernement,
But a most provident Councell, who dare freely
Informe him the corruption of the times ?*

On his first appearance, immediately after the murder, the King cried, *Loué soit Dieu, me voylà Roy: qu'on m'aille querir les vieux serviteurs du feu Roy mon pere, et anciens conseillers de mon conseil d'Estat.* C'est par le conseil de ceux-là que je me veux gouverner desormais.¹ He was as good as his word. Villeroi, Jeannin, du Vair, de Silleri and his son were summoned; the Concini faction, except Richelieu, were expelled; and the Council sat daily.² The King met with them, and is recorded as having given judicious and worthy opinions.³ When appealed to by his subjects about important measures, he constantly deferred all promises till he should have deliberated with his council.⁴ And on the 4th of October, 1617, he issued an edict⁵ convoking an Assembly of Notables at Rouen, of 59 members only, — not a States-general but a "council," rather, — 'a body selected and small enough,' according to his words, 'to be wieldy and practical, which should consider the reformation of the abuses which are to be found in all the orders of the realm': and he solemnly adjures them all, by the authority God has given him over them, que sans autres respect ni considération quelconque, crainte ou désir de plaire ou complaire à personne, ils nous donnent en toutes franchise et sincérité les conseils qu'ils jugeront en leurs consciences les plus salutaires et convenables. As for English reports, in *A True Recital of Those Things That Have Been Done in the Court of France since the Death of Marshall D'Ancre*, London, 1617,⁶ the King is reported as saying, "that he would give order to his Council that the abuses that had crept into his affairs should be remedied by good advice and counsell."⁷ And in *A True Relation of the Deserved Death of the Marquis d'Ancre*, etc., 1617,⁸ a full account, quite similar to the French, is given of the summoning of the Council and of the recall of Villeroi.

The allusion fits, then, — fits as well as the vague language addressed to an audience which understands, and describing in a few lines, not events, but mere sober effects and conditions, would permit. Now it

which K. Lewis XIII's words fit the passage when we construe it as, to make sense, it must be construed — which referring to the clause "Quits . . . persons" — is to my mind cogent argument that W. here had them in mind.

¹ Relation Exacte, Mich. et Pou., V, p. 458.

² Relation Exacte, pp. 466, 467, 469, 470, 471, 472: often two or three times a day.

³ Relation Exacte, pp. 466, 467.

⁶ Registered May 8th.

⁴ Relation Exacte, pp. 462 a, 462 b.

⁷ Pp. 11, 12.

⁸ In Isambert et Decrusy, t. XVI, p. 108 f.

⁸ P. 14, Brit. Mus. copy.

could fit no other possible king or court of France, and no other period than shortly after April, 1617. Before that, as far back as the death of Henry IV, in 1610, there was no king in power, and no state of affairs an Englishman would "admire." And by a year after April, 1617, it would have been evident that Lewis XIII had only fallen into the hands of another set of minions.¹ But within the year the court and king of France would seem, especially so far away as in England, as Webster describes them. Lewis was beginning with such promise: he had put an end to the rebellion in the south, and had made peace between Savoy and Spain²; himself freed from Spanish control, he was now busied with measures of justice, and schemes of legislation and improvement; he bore as yet the title of the Just. The allusion can be to no other than him.

But did England feel like France? What warrant for our finding admiration of Lewis in Webster is there in what we know of the English attitude? "The cry of exultation which was raised in France," says Mr. Gardiner,³ "was echoed in all Protestant lands. The Queen-Mother had always been regarded as the chief supporter of the Spanish party. Even James was carried away by the tide, and for once found himself giving expression to opinions in complete accordance with those of Winwood and Raleigh. . . . James wrote to congratulate the young sovereign of France." And the interest of the people is attested by the activity of the press. A dozen or more of pamphlets relating to the affair, bearing the date of 1617, are still preserved in the British Museum⁴; and there are seven entries of books in the Stationers' Register, from the 17th of April to the 3rd of June, 1617, three of which are of books not to be identified with any of those pre-

¹ After the abrupt dissolution of the Assemblée at Rouen, in the spring and summer of 1618, when the duplicity, tyranny, and rapacity of Luynes came to light, and the king broke his promises (Martin, ed. 1844, XII, 364-7). Whereas (XII, 353, 359) "Le gouvernement de Louis XIII avait tout propice au début"; "les premiers temps du gouvernement . . . furent cependant assez prospères."

² Signed at Pavia, Oct. 9th, 1617. Bazin, *Louis XIII*, t. II, p. 37. Cf. Martin, ed. 1844, XII, p. 359, where the good effect, at home and abroad, of Lewis's conduct in this connection is discussed.

³ Gardiner, III, p. 109.

⁴ Ten bound together, marked 8050. bbb. 56. Besides those already cited: 1. *The True Relation of the Deserved Death of that Base and Insolent Tyrant, The Marquis d'Ancre, the most unworthie Marshall of France*, etc. 2. *Oration made unto the French King by Deputies of the National Synode of the Reformed Church*. 3. *Last Will and Testament of the Marquis*, etc. 4. *Arraignment of Marquis*, etc. 5. *Funeral Obsequies and Buriall of the Marquis*, etc. 6. *The Ghost of the Marquise D'Ancre . . . and Mosequin a deluding spirit by whome her husband was misled*. Another, of the same date, is *The Tears of the Marshall D'Ancre's Wife, shed for the death of her husband*.—This "True Relation" (the first entered in S. R., see below) gives a very circumstantial account of all events, including the purging of the palace.

served. The entries themselves indicate the keenest popular interest, for the first of them are entered only three or four days after the event itself; and the titles betray naively the animus of the writers and of their public.¹ Even the stage responded, for, on June 22nd 1617, the Privy Council wrote to Sir George Buc, Master of the Revels, "to have special care that an entlerude concerning the late Marquis D'Ancre should not be performed."²

The evidence, then, is pretty conclusive that *Malfi* alludes to Lewis XIII, at a time not long after the assassination of Concini; and itself, therefore, falls within the year 1617, after April. To this let me add, however, yet one argument.³ Orazio Busino, chaplain to Pietro Contarini, Venetian Ambassador, left among his manuscripts, now preserved in the Library of St. Mark,⁴ one entitled *Anglipotrida*, a miscellaneous collection of notes on his experiences in England. In the 'second appendix' there is this:

Prendono giuoco gli Inglesi della nostra religione come di cosa detestabile, et superstiziosa, ne mai rappresentano qualsivoglia attione pubblica, sia pura Tragisatiricomica, che non inserischino dentro uitij, et scelleragini di q^lche religioso catolico, facendone risate, et molti scherni, con lor gusto, et ramarico de' buoni, fu appunto veduto dai nostri, in una Commedia introdur' un frate franciscano, astuto, et ripieno di varie impietà, così d'avaritia come di libidine; et il tutto poi riuscì in una Tragedia, facendoli mozzar la vista in scena. Un'altra volta rappresentarono la grandezza d'un card.¹⁰ con li habiti formali, et proprij molti belli, et ricchi, con la sua Corte, facendo in scena erger un Altare, dove finse di far orat.¹⁰, ordinando una processione; et poi lo ridussero in pubblico con una Meretrice in seno. Dimostrò di dar il Velleno ad una sua sorella, per interesse d'honore; et d'andar in oltre alla guerra, con deponer prima l'habito cardinalitio sopra l'altare col mezzo de' suoi Cappell.¹¹ con gravità, et finalm.¹² si fece cingere la spada, metter la serpa,⁵ con tanto garbo, che niente più; et tutto ciò fanno in sprezzo, delle grandezze ecclesiast.¹⁰⁰ vilipese, et odiate a morte in q^{sto} Regno.

Di Londra a' 7 feb.¹¹⁰ 1618.

¹ The first entries are actually Apr. 17th, *A True Relation of the Death of the Marquis D'Ancre*, and Apr. 23rd. The first, on the third day after, indicates a journalistic enterprise almost unbelievable of that day. The entries and pamphlets all of one accord approve the deed.

² Fleay, *Hist. Stage*, p. 309. Mr. Fleay adds, "no doubt *Thierry and Theodoret*." There is much doubt, though. Cf. Thorndike's *Influence of B. & F. on Shak.*, p. 75 f. And I would add to his arguments that the name *de Vitri* occurs as that of a character in Chap.'s *Trag. of Byron*, pub. 1608; and that the *Conspiracy of Byron*, pub. at the same time, contains an astrologer and astrology, as do others of Chap.'s plays.

³ A writer in the *Quarterly Rev.* for 1859, in his review of a translation of Busino's journals and despatches by Rawdon Brown ("not published" then, and so far as I can discover at the Brit. Mus. still not pub.), adds in a note that Busino describes a play in 1618 that must be *Malfi*. Ward repeats this, III, p. 59.

⁴ Cl. VII. Cod. M. C. XXII.

⁵ *Serpa* it is, very distinctly written. No suitable meaning is to be found in any dictionary that has come to my notice. Nor have Venetians whom I have asked been able to explain it. It must mean *sciarpa*, which is the Italian for *scarf*, *military*.

Busino does not say he himself saw the play; and if he did, it is not likely that he understood much of it. The movements on the stage are what impressed him and what he describes. With this in mind, nothing could seem to fit Busino's description better than *Malfi*. In Act II, sc. 4, Webster's Cardinal appears with his mistress Julia alone,¹ and very likely with her in his lap: and in Act III, sc. 4, he goes through all the ceremony of laying aside ecclesiastical vestments, with the assistance of 'churchmen,' and of accourting himself with 'sword,' shield, and spurs. His making show of giving poison to his sister in the interest of her honor (if it means that) might be the banishment of the duchess in dumb-show, in the same scene,² as it appeared to an Italian spectator; and the erection of the altar and the prayer might easily be some of the "business" introduced in one of several scenes in the play, as at the beginning of Act II, sc. 2, he himself reappearing immediately after with Julia in his lap. True, the evidence is not conclusive; though *Malfi* fits the description far better than any other known play, the real play may not have come down to us. But the date of that play, at any rate, harmonizes admirably with that which we had already attained for *Malfi* — the latter half of the year 1617.³

VII. THE DEVIL'S LAW-CASE.

The *Devil's Law-Case* was published in 1623, again without registering at the Stationers'. Fleay⁴ comes at the date 1610 by adding Romelio's 38 years of age to the year of his birth⁵ (the year after Lepanto, *i. e.*, 1572); and by drawing conclusions to the same effect from the waiting-woman's asseverations — though she is lying! — as to her remembering two great frosts, three great plagues, and the

tary scarf. This in the Venetian dialect takes the form *siarpa* or *sierpa*. See Boerio, *Diz. del dialetto Venez.*, Venezia, 1856. This meaning suits the text admirably. It was suggested by Dr. Hartmann.

¹ Also in V, 2.

² This and the investiture, observe, are linked together in Busino's account.

³ The date of this account (see above) is Feb. 7, 1618. Busino says (see above) *un'altra volta*, as if some time ago. The embassy started, according to his *Relazione del Viaggio*, Sept. 2nd, 1617; and his first letter from London he dates Oct. 8th, 1617. — The work of Mr. Sampson on the dates of the plays *W. D.* and *Mal.* seems rather fruitless, particularly in view of his conclusion that the date of the publishing of *W. D.* (1612) may be the date of the composition of *Mal.*, and his doubt whether *Mal.* may not have preceded *W. D.* (xliv). And think of settling the date of *W. D.* by allusions to Ariosto so uncertain as on p. 187 (cf. xl), or by an allusion to Verton's mulberry-planting, in 1609, which amounts to the word *silkworm* (pp. 188 and xl)!

⁴ *Biog. Chr.*, II, 272-3.

⁵ *D. L. C.*, IV, 2 (not II, 4, as Fleay says), pp. 87, 93, 95

taking of Calais. As if the date of the action had to be coincident with that of the first performance; or as if Webster's audiences, or he himself, sat and counted up time-references!

More to the point is the allusion, found by Dyce, to the Massacre of Amboyna, Feb., 1623¹:

Sec. Surg. How? go to the East Indies! and so many Hollanders gone to fetch sauce for their pickled herrings! some have been peppered there too lately.

D. L. C., p. 80.

Yet the connection is impossible, for it is now known, as Mr. Fleay² points out, that the news of the massacre did not reach England until May, 1624. But Dyce's scent was, as usual, true; he rightly recognized an allusion to contemporary affairs, and he could have verified it, had he only turned back a little, to the earlier troubles between the English and Dutch in the East Indies. Such verification is to be found, I think, in Gardiner:

In August [1619] the 'Star' arrived from England bringing news of the opening of negotiations in London. As no treaty had been signed at the date of its departure, the Dutch seized the vessel, and despatched six ships to Sumatra to look out for English traders. On the coast they found four of the Company's vessels busily engaged in lading *pepper*. The captain of one of these, the 'Bear,' had met Sir Thomas Roe at the Cape on his return from India. It happened that a new Dutch admiral also had been there on his outward voyage, with whom Roe had opened communications, which had ended in an agreement that hostilities should be suspended till the result of the negotiations in London could be known. In the suddenness of the attack this agreement was either not produced, or was disregarded. One of the English ships, the 'Dragon,' was forced to surrender, after a combat of an hour's duration, and the other three were too much encumbered with their lading even to attempt a defence. The prisoners were treated with the greatest inhumanity, and many of the wounded died from exposure to the rain upon the open deck. Amongst the prizes on board, the Dutch sailors found a handsome knife, which had been sent out as a present from the King to the native sovereign of Acheen. They carried it about the deck in uproarious procession, shouting out at the top of their voices, "Thou hast lost thy dagger, Jemmy." A few days later two other English vessels were taken at Patani, and the captain of one of them was killed.

Vol. III, pp. 180-1.

This, you see, was no insignificant event; it must have excited public interest; and the pun on "pepper"³ would have been, then as now, inevitable. Now the news of Amboyna reached England, as we have seen, after a year and three months; that of the treaty signed June 2nd, 1619, reached the East Indies on March 8th of the following year⁴: so, allowing the same interval, we may reckon the backward limit of the *Devil's Law-Case* to be the end of 1620.

¹ Dyce says wrongly, 1622.

² *Biog. Chr.*, II, 272: cf. Gardiner, vol. V, p. 242.

³ That the verb "pepper" was then commonly thus used is proved by 1 *Hen. IV.*, II, 4, 212; V, 3, 37; *R. & J.*, III, 1, 102; *Haff.*, I, 1473; *Mass. Virg. Mart.*, p. 18; *Hum. Lieut.*, p. 238; etc.

⁴ Gardiner, *Vol. III*, p. 181.

Should the date be rather thrust on, however, nearer the forward limit? Such a question is to be raised in connection with the possible indebtedness of the *Devil's Law-Case* to the *Spanish Curate*,¹ or to the *Fair Maid of the Inn*. The last is entirely to be excluded from consideration by reason of explicit mention of the Massacre of Amboyna,² and its having been licensed (though written, of course, earlier)³ only in 1626.⁴ And as for the *Spanish Curate* and the *Devil's Law-Case*, they may very well have been produced independently, deriving the law-case story, their only point of contact, the one only from *Gerardo*, and the other from the old play, *Lust's Dominion*; or the *Devil's Law-Case* itself may have influenced the *Spanish Curate*.⁵ However that be, it is to be considered improbable that the *Devil's Law-Case* followed the *Spanish Curate*, by reason of two considerations: first, the lack of any reference to Dutch or East India troubles in the *Spanish Curate*, and the presence of so pointed a reference — “lately” — in the *Devil's Law-Case*; second, the nature of the vicissitudes of the Queen's Men. As to the latter point, Webster's play, according to the title-page, was “approvedly well Acted by her Majesties Servants.” Now Queen Anne died in March, 1619, and there were no real Queen's Servants again till the time of Henrietta, June, 1625.⁶ Still hanging together, however, on the 8th of July, 1622, they obtained a Privy Seal for a new company to be called the “Children of the Revels.”⁷ In the meantime they had continued to act at the Red Bull⁸; but under what name? Under the old one of Queen's Servants, of course, until they received the patent for the new one.⁹ It must have been *before* that, therefore, that they acted the *Devil's Law-Case*.¹⁰ The date of the play must be from the end of 1620 to July, 1622.

¹ Lic. by Herbert, Oct. 24, 1622 (Fleay, *Hist.*, p. 301).

² B. & F., *Works*, II, p. 374.

³ Herbert says expressly, “by Fletcher”: so, before his death, Aug. 1625. And after Amboyna: so after May, 1624.

⁴ In Herbert's Office Book, — Jan. 22nd, 1626.

⁵ *I. e.*, *Gerardo the Unfortunate Spaniard*, translated by Leonard Digges (London, 1622), the general source of the *Sp. Cur.* For a discussion of this whole matter see below, Chap. IV.

⁶ Fleay's *Hist.*, p. 321.

⁷ Though a men's company, Fleay's *Hist.*, p. 270.

⁸ Fleay's *Hist.*, p. 272. I know no other authority, yet Fleay must be right. The *D. L. C.*, as we have seen, must be considerably later than Mar. 2nd, 1619, and yet it was acted by “Her Majesties Servants.”

⁹ Mr. Fleay seems of the opinion that at Queen Anne's death the Company went on playing without any name. Of the acting of *D. L. C.* he says, simply, “and therefore before 1619.” Mr. Sidney Lee repeats this (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*, art. *Webster*).

¹⁰ The company may, of course, have kept the old name popularly, even after the Privy Seal: but not likely, after an official designation was at hand, on the title-

VIII. APPIUS AND VIRGINIA.

Appius and Virginia was first published, so far as is known, in 1654. An *Appius and Virginia* stands last in a list of their own plays, drawn up in August, 1639, by William Beeston, governor of the Cockpit Company¹; and as the only other *Appius and Virginia* known is antiquated, dull, and childish, a specimen not possibly to be played by a royal company in the day of Massinger and Shirley, this must be Webster's.² No other precise data are at hand. But the play is not mentioned in the preface to the *Devil's Law-Case*; and that it was written after that, after 1623, appears from the evidence (to be produced later)³ that it is indebted to Shakspeare, especially to his Roman plays, and in so precise and circumstantial a manner as to indicate the use of the First Folio. A nearer forward limit than that of Beeston's list is unattainable, for the date of Webster's death is unknown.⁴ We must content ourselves, therefore, with the date 1623-39.⁵

IX. A CURE FOR A CUCKOLD.

Webster and Rowley's *Cure for a Cuckold* was first published in 1661. It contains an allusion, long recognized, to Middleton and Rowley's *Fair Quarrel*:

Pett. . . . and there falls in league with a wench.

Compl. A Tweak or Bronstrops: I learned that name in a play. *C. C.*, IV, 1, p. 64.

Ush. What is my sister, centaur?

Col's Tr. I say thy sister is a bronsdrops.

Ush. A bronsdrops?

Chough. Tutor, tutor, — tell me the English of that; what is a bronsdrops, pray?

Col's Tr. A bronsdrops is in English a hippocrene. *F. Q.*, IV, 1, 105-112.

page, especially, I think, as that of the "Queen of Bohemia's players" (*i. e.*, Lady Elizabeth's, so-called after she became such in Nov. 1619) would have made it rather convenient to give up a designation which long had had no meaning, was confusing, and now had no justification. In any case, the Queen's Men existed, even under the new name, only till July or Aug., 1623 (Fleay, *Hist.*, 299, 301), — the absolute forward limit, then, for our play.

¹ Given in Fleay's *Hist. Stage*, p. 357; preserved in the Lord Chamberlain's office.

² *Appius and Virginia, Tragi-Comedy*, by R. B., 4to, 1576. — Halliwell (p. 21) thinks it is the old play.

³ See below, Chap. IV, Sect. III.

⁴ See below, pp. 41-43.

⁵ Mr. Fleay's work on Webster is, I suppose, on his lowest level. Of *A. & V.* he says: "From its allusion, at the end, to *Lucrece* [Heywood's play of 1608], would seem to date c. 1609. It was undoubtedly a play acted by Queen Anne's men, and passed with the *White Devil* to Queen Henrietta's." This allusion to Hey. amounts to the name "Lucretia"; and there is not a tittle of evidence to show that the play was acted by Queen Anne's.

As the *Fair Quarrel* first appeared in print in 1617, this may be considered a fairly certain backward limit. But there is a nearer. The plot of Webster's portion is in part derived, as we shall yet prove,¹ from Massinger's *Parliament of Love*. This play was licensed for the Cockpit on Nov. 3rd, 1624. The only forward limit, however, of the *Cure for a Cuckold* as of *Appius and Virginia*, is the date of Webster's death, whatever that may be.

X. THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE DOUBTFUL PLAYS.

It remains to consider the authenticity of three plays — the *Cure for a Cuckold*, the *Thracian Wonder*, and *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall*.

The Weakest Goeth to the Wall, registered and published in 1600, is easily disposed of. Neither title-page nor stationers' entry mentions the author. The play itself shows not the slightest trace of Webster's hand, and it was first attributed to him (by Edward Phillips, a nephew of Milton) so late as 1675.² "A great mistake," says the judicious Langbaine.³

The *Cure for a Cuckold* and the *Thracian Wonder* must be considered, so far as external evidence is concerned, together. Both were first published by Francis Kirkman in 1661. Both, evidently, were sent to press at about the same time, for the title-pages, with the exception of bare title, are, both in phrase and typography, exactly alike.⁴ Both bear the names of John Webster and William Rowley. Both have been challenged by most critics of the century; and hardly any one supported the authenticity of either till Mr. Gosse asserted the artistic worth of the main-plot of the *Cure for a Cuckold*, and, on that basis, its authenticity.⁵

¹ See below, Chap. IV, Sect. I.

² Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum*, 1675, pp. 116-17, where he assigns to him also the *Noble Stranger*, *New Trick to Cheat the Devil*, and *Woman will have her Will* (the second probably by association with *D. L. C.*). — Hazlitt wrongly states (vol. I, p. xx) that the attribution rests on the authority of Winstanley, in 1687.

³ P. 510. He says it of Phillips, in regard not only to the *Weakest* but also the *Noble Stranger*, *New Trick to Cheat the Devil*, and *Woman will have her Will*.

⁴ *A Cure for a Cuckold A Pleasant Comedy As it hath been several times Acted with great Applause. Written by John Webster and William Rowley. Placere Cupio. London. Printed by Tho. Johnson, and are to be sold by Francis Kirkman, at his Shop at the Sign of John Fletchers Head, over against the Angel-Inne, on the Back side of St. Clements, without Temple Bar 1661.* — *The Thracian Wonder. A Comical History*, — and the rest identical. See the reproductions of the original title-pages in Haz., vol. IV, pp. 1 and 115. There is no deviation except at *London*.

⁵ For Gosse, see below; Ward in his *History*, Symonds in introd. to *Mer. Webster*, Lee in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, art. *Webster*, who hesitatingly follow Gosse; Bullen in *Middleton*, footnote to *F. Q.*, IV, 1, 105, 112; Fleay. For Dyce, see below, p. 37.

The attribution, for which Kirkman is responsible, is, indeed, late. But it is unjustifiable to hold, with Fleay and others, that consequently it is worthless¹ (for a late attribution by the first publisher is a very different matter from a late attribution by a mere uncritical critic such as Phillips); or that, if it can be proved wrong in regard to one of the plays, it must therefore be wrong in regard to the other. There could be no *fraud* intended, as there might be in the case of more popular names, such as Shakspeare² or Fletcher; and there must be some reason other than fraud or caprice for associating with the name of Rowley—not Middleton's, Fletcher's, Ford's, Massinger's, or Dekker's³—but Webster's. Very likely, Kirkman had the manuscripts in his hands, and one of the two, at least, avouched this unprecedented partnership. For that he had some basis of fact to go on, is proved by what Mr. Fleay and every one concede—Rowley's unmistakable touch in the *Cure for a Cuckold*.⁴

How did Webster's name get associated with Rowley's? The same story as that of the *Thracian Wonder*, as Collier has pointed out,

¹ Fleay, II, 273.

² As is actually the case with the *Birth of Merlin*, pub. by Kirkman in 1662, and attributed to Shak. and Rowley.

³ With Middleton's, of course, in many plays; with Fletcher's in the *Maid in the Mill* (Herbert's office book, Chalmers's Supp. Apol., ed. 1799, p. 215); with Dekker's and Ford's in *Edmonton*; with Massinger's in the *The Old Law*.

⁴ Fleay, II, p. 99; Ward; Seccombe in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, "Rowley"; etc. That is, R. is the author of the under-plot, the story of Compass, his wife, her child, and Frankford. This is altogether apart from the main-plot, not only in subject and style, but also in structure; Frankford's being a brother-in-law of Woodruff is the only link between the two. Mr. Edmund Gosse, the first critic to take a stand for Webster's authorship of the main-plot, separated it from the under-plot—a very simple business of subtraction,—and in his edition of the main-plot, which he calls *Love's Graduate* (Oxford, 1885), takes honor to himself for his discovery. The discovery amounts to Mr. Gosse's oracular reassertion of Kirkman's title-page.

R.'s authorship of the under-plot is indicated by the *tweak* and *bronstrops* passage quoted from his previous play, and by the style in every scene. The extreme, yet laughable, absurdity of Compass's attitude to his "son," of his persisting in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, which he has intellectually accepted, in calling himself "father" (IV, 3, p. 77, "when the father is beyond sea as this was"), is paralleled by the Clown in the *Birth of Merlin*, who can't get over the wonder of it that his sister should be got with child and he not know of it (II, 1, 1. 35 f); or (though here with a harder, more cynical touch) by Gnotho, who comes "crowding on afore" with a band of fiddlers, leading his old wife to her grave, and his new-chosen bride to the wedding, and, when the duke plainly tells him the law that the superannuated should die is now abolished, cries in eager hurry, "I'll talk further with your grace when I come back from church: in the meantime you know what to do with the old woman." Of the same stripe are Compass's reasonings before the lawyers (IV, 1).

appeared in 1617,¹ with the title, "*The most pleasant and delightful Historie of Curan, Prince of Danske, and the Fayre Princesse Argentele, Daughter and Heyre of Adelbriht, sometime King of Northumberland*. This was by one William Webster. Now Kirkman, knowing the story, — for Kirkman, as his advertisements, or addresses to the reader,² and his catalogue of Elizabethan plays³ prove, was a reading man, — might have confused the names of William Webster and John Webster, or put for the unknown the known as a guess. But this is not likely, it seems to me, unless the manuscript of the only other play of John Webster's he ever published, the *Cure for a Cuckold*, which he was publishing, too, as the title-pages show, at this very time, had already John Webster's name attached.

And how, on the other hand, did Rowley's⁴ name get on the title-page of the *Thracian Wonder*, which shows not one trace of his hand? This play is already assigned to one author — Webster, — and a second, in a matter of guessing, would be superfluous. Rowley's name, we may rest assured, Kirkman never would have thought of adding to Webster's on the title-page of the *Thracian Wonder*, were it not already connected with Webster's in the only possible instance of such connection, — his manuscript of the *Cure for a Cuckold*.

On either hand, then, external evidence intimates that Kirkman was neither cheating nor blindly guessing — that he erred in the case of the *Thracian Wonder* only through the influence of authority in the case of the *Cure for a Cuckold*. Internal evidence confirms this. The *Thracian Wonder* shows not the slightest trace of either Rowley's or Webster's hand: neither ever wrote in the pastoral-idyllic style; neither ever wrote anything soft and foolish and vulgarly absurd. The ogre of a king belching out destruction in his court, and among the shepherds' cotes meek as any lamb; telling the Sicilian ambas-

¹ See Haz., IV, pp. 117-18. Collier and Dyce rest content, however, merely with the theory of the confusion of Wm. with John Webster, and with the assertion that the *T. W.* contains no trace of W.'s hand.

² See, for instance, that to the *Cure for a Cuckold* in Haz. Web.

³ *True and perfect and exact Catalogue of all the the Comedies, Tragedies, and Tragi-comedies, etc., that were ever yet printed and published till this present year 1671* (Brit. Mus.).

⁴ Fleay thinks the association of W.'s with R.'s name *prima facie* evidence of error; "They never worked together." (II, 99.) What that amounts to is, there are no other title-pages bearing their names! To my mind, on the contrary, the association of Webster's name with Rowley's is presumptive evidence in favor of itself. In the first place, Webster's name could not have got there through being mistaken for any of those names otherwise associated with Rowley, — Middleton, Ford, Massinger, etc., — for the play bears no sign of their hand. In the second, there is no other Rowley-Webster play from which this play could be named by analogy. Were there any other, I should be suspicious.

of Webster's character and style, derived merely from the *White Devil* and *Malfi*. But nothing is truer than that the Elizabethan dramatists were Protean, enormously susceptible, and that at different periods they followed different tendencies, different fashions. That is what Webster did in *Malfi* and the *White Devil*, — wrote, as we shall see, in the style of a school, — and his whole character is no more to be found in these two sombre tragedies than Shakspere's in *Titus Andronicus* and *Richard III*, or in the *Tempest* and *Winter's Tale*. Now in the *Cure for a Cuckold* he borrowed his plot almost bodily, as we shall yet see, from Massinger's *Parliament of Love*. The presumption, thereby arising, that he should borrow, besides, something of the style and manner, a careful examination confirms; and not only this play, but the *Devil's Law-Case* and *Appius and Virginia* as well, show traces of the master influence of the day in which they took form — the influence of Massinger and Fletcher. Like Shakspere, like Chapman, Webster followed in their day of honor the lead of more forward and fashionable, though not more knowing, masters.¹

Yet we need not seem to beg the question — we need not, in order to prove the *Cure for a Cuckold* Webster's, seem to some to rob him of his integrity and make him out a different man. His hand and touch are here, even those of the *Malfi* Webster. Let me bring forward only a few parallels of phrasing to prove this:

1. Four times — in the *White Devil*, the *Devil's Law-Case*, and twice in the *Cure for a Cuckold* — Webster makes a woman cry out at the news of her lover's death (brought, moreover, in three cases by the would-be slayer himself),

Oh, I am lost forever!²

2. On this same occasion, in both the *Devil's Law-Case* and the *Cure for a Cuckold*, she cries to the would-be slayer,

O, you have struck him dead through my heart!³

3. In both the *Cure for a Cuckold* and the *Devil's Law-Case*, the two young men who are about to fight a duel, speak of wearing a "*privy*

¹ Shak.: see Thorndike's *Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher*. Web.: see the chapters on *C. C.* and *D. L. C.* Chap.: see App. II.

² *C. C.*, IV, 2, p. 69, Clare; III, 3, p. 54, Annabel; *W. D.*, V, 1, p. 112, Vittoria (here, however, Brachiano is only dying); *D. L. C.*, II, 3, p. 46, Leonora.

³ *C. C.*, IV, 2, p. 69, Clare to Lessingham; *D. L. C.*, III, 3, p. 68, "You have given him the wound you speak of quite through your mother's heart." — In *D. L. C.*, indeed, this speech is uttered not at the same time as "O I am lost," etc., but at the second announcement of Contarino's death, from the mouth of her son, his would-be slayer. — The phrase itself is copied, like so many others in Web., from the *Arcadia*. See below, Chap. III, Sect. I, and *Notes and Queries*, Oct. 15, 1904, p. 304.

coat," — what one in the one play calls his "*heart*," and one in the other¹ the "justice of his cause." In both cases it is an immaterial, and yet striking, coincidence of phrase and thought, such as would be brought forth only by the same mind under the same circumstances.

4. Compare Clare in this play —

I am every way lost, and no means to raise me
But blest repentance! C. C., IV, 2, p. 72.

—and Cornelia to Flamineo, in the *White Devil* —

To tell how thou shouldst spend the time to come
W. D., IV, 5, p. 209.

—where the same phrase takes exactly the same position and accent in the metre, a slight matter no imitator would copy.

5. The peculiar curse in the *Cure for a Cuckold*,

And may my friend's blood, whom you loved so dearly,
Forever lie impostsu'd in your breast,
And i' th' end choke you! C. C., IV, 2, p. 72.

and in the *White Devil*,

Die with those pills in your most curs'd maw,
Should bring you health! or while you sit o' th' bench,
Let your own spittle choke you! W. D., III, 2, p. 65.

6. In *A Cure for a Cuckold*:

You have ta'en a mass of lead from off my heart
Forever would have sunk it in despair. IV, 2, p. 70.

In *Malfi*:

And thou hast ta'en that massy sheet of lead
That hid thy husband's bones, and folded it
About my heart. III, 2, pp. 209-10.

7. In *A Cure for a Cuckold*:

You are to sleep with a sweet bed-fellow
Would knit the brow at that. IV, 2, p. 74.

In the *White Devil*:

why, the saints in heaven
Will knit their brows at that. II, p. 38.

In both cases the expression is used alike figuratively; and in the same place in the metre and the sentence.

8. In *A Cure for a Cuckold* there is a couplet which recalls one that appears in both *Malfi* and the *White Devil* (see note at the end of Chapter II):

And it were sin
Not in our age to show what we have bin. I, 1, p. 16.

¹ D. L. C., II, 1, pp. 39, 40; C. C., III, 1, pp. 47.

There are yet other parallel passages, but let them pass. Of these quoted, nos. 1, 2, and 3 coincide in wording, dramatic situation, and character; others, as nos. 4 and 8, merely in the expression; but most of them, being colorless and insignificant in themselves, and resembling each other far more in form than in substance, are, like the drawing of ears or little toes in a painter or sculptor, no more the points another would think of copying than he himself of changing.

Another test we might apply to the *Cure for a Cuckold* is the use of the exclamation *ha!*, especially as comprehending a whole speech. This is of extraordinary frequency in Webster.¹ It appears in the *White Devil* 13 times, 6 of them being whole speeches; in *Malfi* 10 times, 2 of them whole speeches; in the *Law-Case* 9 times, 4 of them whole speeches; in *Appius and Virginia* twice; in the main plot of the *Cure for a Cuckold* 7 times, 2 of them whole speeches. In view of the slight extent of Webster's part of the *Cure for a Cuckold* as compared with that of the other plays, and of the frigidity and academic character of the Roman play, *Appius and Virginia*, the statistics for the different plays keep remarkably even, and the *Cure for a Cuckold* seems only to take its place with the others.

There are still other points of similarity, such as cheap, deceptive tricks with words.

Less. Then truth is, he's dangerously wounded.

Wood. But he's not dead, I hope?

Less. No, Sir, not dead:

Yet sure your daughter may take liberty
To choose another.

I told you he was wounded, and 'tis true;

He is wounded in his reputation. *C. C.*, V, 1, pp. 86-7.

Compare with this *Appius and Virginia*, I, 1, p. 132, where Appius pretends to go into banishment, but winds up in this fashion:

Banish'd from all my kindred and my friends;

Yea, banish'd from myself; for I accept

This honorable calling.

This is a favorite artifice of Webster's. In the *White Devil*, V, 2, p. 131, Flamineo speaks of his "two case of jewels," which in a moment turn out to be pistols, and Lodovico answers Giovanni's question on whose authority he had committed the massacre, thus:

Lod. By thine.

Gio. Mine!

Lod. Yes; thy uncle, which is a part of thee, enjoined us to 't.

W. D., V, 2, p. 142.

¹ These are the references: *W. D.*, pp. 33, 35, 57, 61, 64, 73, 81, 93, 108, 128, 141, 142; *Malfi*, 177, 190, 190, 211, 232, 241, 249, 267, 273, 276; *D. L. C.*, 25, 59, 62, 62, 65, 68, 69, 70, 116; *C. C.*, 30, 40, 46, 89, 90, 91, 96; *A. & V.*, 152, 214.

In *Appius and Virginia* Virginius surrenders his daughter "into the court—of all the gods"¹; and in the *Devil's Law-Case* and the *Cure for a Cuckold* this bent of his goes to such lengths as to lose utterly the spectator's confidence and sympathy. See, for instance, Jolenta's letter to Contarino, and Clare's letter (another point of similarity!) to Lessingham.²

Another proof is the number of striking parallels in plot between the *Cure for a Cuckold* and Webster's only other independent comedy, the *Devil's Law-Case*, at points where it does not follow the *Parliament of Love*.³ But enough has been brought forward already, I think, to prove Webster's authorship beyond a cavil.

If, however, the *Cure for a Cuckold* be made to follow the *Parliament of Love*, licensed to play November, 1624, some one well-read in Fleay or the *Dictionary of National Biography* may cry, "But Webster died in 1625." Mr. Fleay says, "He was probably the John Webster, cloth-worker, who made his will the 5th of Aug. 1625, proved 7th Oct."⁴; and Mr. Sidney Lee assents.⁵ But, I think, without reason. It was the indefatigable Dyce who first brought forward John Webster, clothworker, and his will of 1625; and Dyce consigns it, as the only shred of evidence there is on the death of any John Webster within a remarkable stretch of time, to a foot-note. To this he adds, for completeness' sake, the will of a John Webster, tallow-chandler.⁶

The abstract of the will furnished Mr. Dyce by the Prerogative Office is as follows:

John Webster, clothworker, of London, made his will on the 5th of August, 1625. He bequeathes to his sister, Jane Cheney, dwelling within seven miles of Norwich 10 l., with remainder, if she died, to her children, and if they died, to his sister Elizabeth Pyssing; to whom he also left 10 l., with remainder to her children. To his father-in-law, William Hattfield, of Whittington, in Derbyshire, 15 l., and to his four children 4 l. each. To his cousin Peter Webster, of Whittington, in Derbyshire, he gives 10 l., and if he died before it was paid, it was to be given to his brother, who was a protestant, "for I hear that one brother of my cousin Peter is a papist." To William Bradbury, of London, shoemaker, 5 l. To Richard Matthew, his (the testator's) son-in-law, 16 l. He mentions his father-in-law, Mr. Thomas Farman. He gives his counsin Edward Curtice, 1 l. 2 s., etc. He leaves the residue of his property to his brothers and sisters in law, by his wife; specially providing that Eliza-

¹ *A. & V.*, IV, 1, p. 201.

² *D. L. C.*, V, 2, p. 107; cf. III, 3, pp. 62, 63; *C. C.*, I, p. 13; cf. II, 4, p. 38, as to his being mistaken, and the explanations, pp. 38, 54, 69, 74.—And for other deceptive verbal tricks, p. 47 and pp. 48, 49.

³ Below, Chap. IV, Sect. I, note at end.

⁴ *Biog. Chr.*, II, 268.

⁵ "He seems to have died," etc., *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, art. *Webster*. Likewise Mr. Gosse, *Jacobean Poets*, London, 1894, p. 166.

⁶ Dyce's *Web.*, ed. 1857, p. x.

beth Walker should be one. He constitutes Mr. Robert Aungel, and his cousin, Mr. Francis Ash, citizens, his executors; and his cousins Courtis and Tayler, overseers of his will,—which was proved by his executors on the 7th of October, 1625.

This document is neither written nor signed by the testator; he and three of the witnesses (his cousin Edward Curtis, the fourth, being the only exception) are fain to make their marks.¹ Now it is inconceivable that John Webster, playwright, should not have signed his name unless too weak to hold the pen (which the date of the proving makes unlikely); and it is highly improbable that with friends like Dekker, Munday, Heywood, Ford, and Rowley² still living, he should have been abandoned in his last hours to the society of illiterates, or, with so large an estate on his hands, should have bequeathed it only to distant Protestant relatives and a shoemaker. Our Webster, moreover, was not a clothworker. "Merchant-Taylor" he designates himself on the title-page of the *Monuments of Honor*, a pageant of "the Right Worthy and Worshipful Fraternity, the Eminent Merchant Taylors," — a thing (as Dyce and Fleay surely knew) very different.³ And, even as merchant-tailor, he speaks of himself at this same time, in the dedication to Gore, only as of one "*born free of your company*."⁴ He is, therefore, not any of the three John Websters *made free*⁵ of the Company in 1571, 1576, and 1617⁶; still less that one

¹ I give this on the authority of Mr. Crofts. See below, p. 43, note.

² That these last were also his friends, appears from the partnership with Ford, and his verses addressed to Munday and Heywood.

³ It is unlikely that in the will of J. W., clothworker, there should have been any such mistake. However loosely and vaguely such three designations as clothworker, merchant-tailor, and draper may be used today, it was otherwise then, when one necessarily understood by each a member of one of the Twelve Great Companies of London (see list in Ashley's *English Econ. Hist.*, 1893, vol. II, p. 133).

⁴ See *Works*, III, p. 232; pub. in 1624.

⁵ This distinction is important. See Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds* (London, 1870), p. cxxxii: "the whole household of a Gild-brother belonged to the Gild," etc.

⁶ *Works*, I, introd., p. vi. — Possibly, on the other hand, he may have been a son of one of the earlier ones. The due-bill dated July 25th, 1591, wherein John Alleyn and Edward Alleyn acknowledge their indebtedness to "John Webster, citysen and merchant Tayler of London" in the sum of 15 shillings, is probably the nearest we come by documentary evidence to John Webster the poet. This may be the poet's father, who may have had dealings with actors and so come to get his son into their society. This would harmonize with our poet's being *born free* of the company. The due-bill is printed in the *Alleyn Papers*, ed. by Collier (who suggests that this Webster may be the father of the poet), London, 1843, p. 14; and is accounted by Warner in his *Catalogue of Dulwich College Mss.* as genuine. — If this be so, the poet can not be the 'nephew John Webster, as near to whom as might be' John Webster, the tallow-chandler, in his will of Feb. 16th, 1628, wishes to be buried; there could not have been two brothers called John.

assessed 10 shillings on March 15th, 1603¹; nor, indeed, is he to be reckoned a craftsman at all. The designation on the title-page is perfunctory, in compliment to the company for which he wrote the pageant; and Webster is no more of a merchant-tailor than any of the other worthies mentioned in this pageant as "free of the company," than that bold soldier of fortune, Sir John Hawkwood, Queen Anne, or the "bad man but good king, Richard the Third."²

We may conclude, therefore, without a shadow of doubt, that Webster is not John Webster, clothworker; and since there are no more wills of John Websters at Somerset House,³ from 1621-35, there is, at any rate, no longer a will and probate in the way⁴ of Webster's writing the *Cure for a Cuckold* after Nov. 3rd, 1624.

XI. THE PERIODS OF WEBSTER'S WORK.

Now, at last, we are in a position to tabulate on a secure basis the development of Webster's art. Three periods, of course (according to the hackneyed and inevitable scheme), are to be discerned: Growth, Maturity, and Decay, the point of Maturity being marked by the *White Devil* and *Malfi*. Another principle, however, is to be preferred, — that of the prevalent influences. According to this latter, his work falls into these periods:

1. Period of Apprenticeship and Partnership: mainly under the influence of Dekker.

sesers ffalle	1602
too shapes	1602
<i>Sir Thomas Wyatt</i> (Lady Jane)	1602
cryssmas comes bute once ayeare	1602

¹ *I. e.*, toward a pageant for King James. Clode (*Memorials of the Merchant Taylors' Company*, Lon., 1875, p. 596), who takes it as a matter of course that this is the poet himself, admits (p. 601, note) that the records do not show that he ever took up the freedom acquired by birth. Clode seems not to know of the *Alleyne Papers* John Webster, who is probably the man assessed.

² *Mon. Hon.*, pp. 238-9. Mischief in this business of the tailor was made by Dyce (blindly followed by Haz.), in quoting wrongly the title-page of the *Mon. Hon.* He says, ed. 1830, vol. I, p. 11, that there W. describes himself as "John Webster Taylor," although in vol. IV, App., he gives the title-page correctly — "Merchant-Taylor," — from the "copy, perhaps unique, belonging to the Duke of Devonshire." His calling himself "Taylor" is, of course, a different matter.

³ What facts I have here given concerning the Clothworker's parchment I owe to the services of Mr. T. Robertson W. Crofts, Highgate. He was not allowed by the authorities to copy it or to have it copied; and after he had furnished me with the above facts, I decided photographing was not necessary.

⁴ Excepting always the tallow-chandler's.

Induction to the *Malcontent*¹
Westward Ho
Northward Ho

bef. July, 1604
 c. September 1604–1605
 Spring 1605–1606

2. Period of the Revenge Plays: mainly under the influence of Marston.

The White Devil
The Duchess of Malfi

Winter 1611–1612
 , 1617, after April

3. Fletcherian and Academic Period: under the influence not only of Fletcher and Massinger, but of the old-fashioned dramatists, Marlowe, Heywood, and Shakspeare.

The Guise
The Devil's Law-Case
Appius and Virginia
A Cure for a Cuckold

prob. after *Malfi* and before *D. L. C.*²
 end 1620—July 1622
 1623–1639
 after Nov., 1624

¹ This, as I prove in Chap. II, is all Web. wrote.

² See below, Chap. IV, Sect. IV, end.

LEBENS LAUF.

Ich wurde am 11ten Feb., 1874, zu Orrville in Ohio, als Sohn des Artztes Stoll, geboren. Ich besuchte Harvard University, und selbst promovierte ich im Jahr 1895 zum Baccalaureus Artium und ein Jahr danach zum Magister. Dann reiste ich, studierte für mich selbst, und musste meine Gesundheit kräftigen. Von September, 1900, bis Juni, 1902, erteilte ich Unterricht in der Englischen Philologie auf dem Adelphi College zu Brooklyn. Im Wintersemester desselben Jahres fing ich an, germanische und romanische Philologie an der kgl. Fried. Wil. Univ. zu Berlin zu studieren, und hierauf setzte ich meine Studien an der kgl. Lud. Max. Univ. zu München fort.

Auf Harvard Univ. wohnte ich unter anderen den Vorlesungen der Professoren Child, Norton, Hill, Kittredge, Baker, und Gates bei, und zu Berlin und München denen der Professoren Brandl, Roethe, Simmel, Breymann, Paul, und Schick.



